

IEP and 504 Plan Rising's Suggested Guidelines

For Transitions from:

Pre-school to Kindergarten, to Grade School

Grade School to Middle School

Middle School to High School

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I. Introduction

Since its inception in 2012, the Bellevue Special Needs PTA has requested from the Bellevue School District, clearly written, consistent, transparent guidelines for parents, teachers and staff members alike to follow for the Bellevue School District IEP and 504 plan processes. Though we understand the Bellevue School District is working to improve upon their processes, in the interim, as our children continue to attend school to progress their education, we see the distinct need for guidelines right now.

Our goal is to provide the experience and knowledge we have available of the most proactive and positive steps toward one of the most concerning issues, the movement of our children to the next level of schooling.

As described in the following content, this movement, very typically called **transition**, can be confusing when looking at the legal interpretation in IDEA, which only refers to students moving from high school to post-secondary education or other alternatives. The following information only refers to children moving from pre-school, grade school, middle school and into high school, at this time.

Though we have done our best to bring together as much experience and information as possible in this document, all situations are most likely not covered and our suggestions and guidelines may not work for everyone. We appreciate your feedback if you have further suggestions.

We hope you find this helpful.

Thank you,

The Bellevue Special Needs PTA

II. A Rising Versus an IEP Transition or IEP or 504 Plan Re-Evaluation

As determined by the Bellevue School District, a **Rising** is a student's *movement or transition* from pre-school, grade school and middle school to the next level of secondary schooling. These are sometimes referred to as **transitions**, however, the term **transition**, as used in special education law, IDEA, refers only to the movement from high school to post-secondary education and other alternatives. As this final movement from secondary school is addressed in the law by IDEA, it is regulated differently than the earlier *movements or transitions* referred to in this document. School districts use different terms for this action. Lake Washington School District uses the term 'Promotion'. For further reference, see <http://www.lwsd.org/Parents/Special-Education/Pages/Promotion-Process.aspx>. For the sake of clarity, we will use the term **Rising** throughout this document.

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After your child has been evaluated and determined and agreed upon to receive an IEP or 504 Plan by the school district, the annual follow-up meetings which occur are called **Re-evaluation Meetings**. These meetings are either required by law or by the school district once a year, by that same meeting date, i.e. April 10, 2013, April 10, 2014, etc.

Your child's **Rising and having a meeting regarding their rising**, in and of itself, to address your child's move to the next level of schooling is not required by the law or the school district. From experience, most typically, your child's case manager or counselor will not provide a separate meeting to address your child's rising, and may not even address it in their required annual Re-evaluation Meeting. It is most often up to the parents to see that rising issues are planned for and addressed in your child's IEP or 504 plan.

III. Steps to Initiate Your Child's Rising to the Agenda

If you are concerned about your child's rising, and do not think that separated staff coordination conversations and efforts will do enough to support your child's success, it is suggested that their Rising is addressed at a team meeting. Even if you think all is well, it is a very positive practice to ensure this is addressed with a team meeting. There are 2 ways for parents to make sure their child's rising is addressed:

1. Before your child's **Re-evaluation Meeting** is due to be scheduled with you and the other team members, contact your child's case manager or counselor and let them know that you would like to make sure that your child's rising is addressed on that meeting agenda. The more specific you can be, such as providing a list of questions and issues, the more will be addressed and hopefully accomplished. Examples are provided later in this document.
2. If your child's Re-evaluation Meeting has already passed, or the appropriate future team members from the new school are not able to attend the re-evaluation meeting, you can request a separate **Rising Meeting**.

Having at least one future team member from the new school attend is imperative. Future team members should be included in your child's rising meeting as it will help ensure that what is decided can be implemented in the new school setting.

Ensure that you, yourself have appropriate notice for your team meetings. If you are asked to attend a meeting as you pick up your child at school, you do **not** have to do this, and that should not put your

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child in any jeopardy. It is reasonable to request different meeting days and times which also work for you.

Certain timelines and written notice are required by law for most of these meetings. See **Resources**.

Note: Always, always make sure all requests, decisions, etc. are in writing for all IEP and 504 Plan coordination!

IV. Preparation for a Rising Team Meeting

Take some time to prepare for a team meeting addressing your child's rising as you would for all of their other re-evaluation team meetings. Create a list of all of your concerns. If you can organize your list with related concerns together, that should help the meeting. If you have major concerns, move those to the beginning of the list to make sure those have the most time to address.

If you have questions or concerns which you think the team may not have enough information to address, feel free to do some research, including talking with teachers, staff, and other families from the new school, to get their perspective. In fact, you may find that other teachers, not on the "team", may have some very helpful experience and suggestions, which you can bring to the meeting for discussion.

Feel free to bring someone to the meeting with you. This is your right by law. This can be someone to take notes or a private practitioner who knows your child and can help advocate on his or her behalf.

Remember: you are an EQUAL member of the IEP team. The professionals' roles are important and different from yours, but no more valuable.

V. Potential Example Questions and Concerns

Below is a list of very common example questions and concerns. These are just some examples and do not cover the full range of questions and concerns that may need to be addressed for your child.

- Are there multiple placement options for your child? If so, request opportunities to observe them and meet the personnel in order to understand what they have to offer.

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- How will services change on the IEP from the current school to the new one?
- Will there be a different case manager assigned?
- When and where will my child's services be delivered?
- How many students are in the classroom/classrooms that my child will be attending?
- What is the best way for me to communicate with my child's teacher through the rising and throughout the school year?
- What skills does your child need to work on during this last year of their current school to better prepare him/her for the new school? You want your child equipped to be successful in his or her least restrictive environment.
- What percentage of the day will my child be removed from the general education setting?
- What supports will be available to my child in their classroom?
- If a paraeducator is assigned, what are their qualifications and how will they be used to support my child?
- What social skills groups are available to my child?
- How will transportation be handled for my child? Do we need a transportation plan?
- How and why have the accommodations in the IEP for my child been chosen and how will they be used?
- How will my child's behavior or aversive behavior plan be implemented or changed?
- What would a typical academic/specialist class schedule look like for a 6th grade student with an IEP? (Examples: For a student with SpEd assistance in writing and social skills, does writing assistance class take the place of regular LA class or does it take the place of an elective? Do IEP students have a special homeroom class that helps prepare them for the day?)
- What are the different programs for students with special needs?
- Concern: It would be ideal if a student could be assigned a counselor who would remain consistent each year in order to develop rapport and help student feel comfortable when anxious. Having the right counselor and not being re-assigned each year would be helpful for students with IEPs. Please talk about counselor assignments and other support staff.
- What support will be there for a student who has trouble using a locker and remembering their class schedule?
- What support is available to help a student organize class papers, binders, homework and assignments? What supports are in place to help students learn how to prepare ahead of time?
- What social skills support is in place at [School Name] for IEP students? Social groups (SEPIA club), buddies (WEB/mentors)?
- Communication on events, clubs and activities. It is difficult for many of our IEP students to remember something they're told verbally. What are typical communication paths between parents, students, and school? (School's web site, e-mail newsletters, other?)

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- How are para-educators assigned and determined? How far in advance is this need determined and planned for? (Are para-educators one-on-one or shared?)
- Will para-educators be in place and assigned to the student prior to the beginning of the school year?
- What training will the para-educator that will be working with my child receive pertaining to my child's IEP and disability?
- How will the general education teacher(s) prepare for my student?
- (Related to middle and high school) Do all of the general education teachers have easy access to my child's IEP prior to the beginning of the school year.
- If the general education teacher(s) from the new school are not present at the Rising meeting, how will they be provided needed information? Arrange another time to meet.
- As children progress through the system are they placed in schools based on their diagnosis?
- Who is the current resource room teacher? How does middle school "work" for kids with IEPs? (Would Tyee's SpEd teacher(s) be available on information night to meet and answer questions?)
- Will a student with an IEP be able to participate in elective classes? Concern here is that if all elective openings are used up with SpEd classes, student won't get to participate in any "fun classes" which might help student with their enthusiasm for school. Is there flexibility in this? For example: if parents sign student up for extracurricular PE activity such as Tae Kwon Do, would that waiver the PE requirement and allow the student to take art/shop/digital tech in lieu of PE?
- How do we fill out registration forms for classes in middle school? (What is different about registration forms for students with an IEP?)
- How do accommodations work for after school activities, like tutorial? Some discussion of the benefits of attending tutorials would be useful here, such as small working groups with individualized attention in some cases, better opportunity for shy students to ask questions, IEP students could attend a Monday tutorial to practice writing in agendas
- What accommodations can we ask for/expect and how does this differ from what the student is used to in elementary school?
- What is the general process for students with an IEP to register for classes? Are there special steps taken for this population of students prior to starting 6th grade in September?
- What do parents need to prepare for? How are middle school IEP meetings different from elementary school IEP meetings? Will there be meetings with middle school staff prior to the start of school?
- What changes should be made to the student's IEP prior to leaving elementary school?
- Who can parents contact if they have additional Special Education specific questions?
- What type of support is available? (Peer tutors, paras)

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- Where is this support available? (What is available at HS, MS?)

VI. During the Meeting

Bring your list of concerns and questions with you to the meeting. Alternatively, you could also send to the team in advance, if you think that would be helpful. Particularly if your list is long, and/ or you have major items of concern, it would be most helpful to tell the team about this early in the meeting to help to resolve as much as possible during the meeting.

It may be very likely that all of your questions and concerns are not resolved to your satisfaction or there was not enough time to cover everything during this meeting. Do not let that stop you from letting the rest of the team know that there is more to be covered. Decide if you are comfortable with completing the rest either with another meeting, or team email, as most typical, and offer a couple of days and times, if needed, to meet again.

Do not feel pressured to sign a re-evaluation form, if you do not feel enough has been resolved. However, if you are comfortable that most major concerns have been addressed, signing the form does not keep you from pursuing the same or different issues of concern in the future.

Ask for an emailed or mailed copy of the final signed forms to be sent to you.

Is/are the new school team members or contacts available for contact a week or 2 before school begins in the fall? Either way, ask for their contact information and when they will be available to touch base, if needed.

VII. Follow-Up After the Meeting(s)

Ensure that you receive your copies of all documents as requested. If needed, email and call until you do. Keep your documents handy for your reference when school starts in the fall.

Before or when school starts in the fall, feel free to touch base with any and all of the team members, particularly if any of your questions and concerns require any additional attention, or things are not being done as you were told and written they would be done.

Then follow-up, follow-up, follow-up.....

Hopefully, your child's rising, transition to their new school goes well with positive proactive outreach, communication and coordination by all of the team members, parents, teachers and other staff. Some

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of us have experienced this from one end of the spectrum to the other. When this is working the way it should, our children are happy and successful.

VIII. Resources

<http://www.BellevueSpecialNeedsPTA.com>

<http://www.parentcenterhub.org/repository/idea-copies/>

<http://www.k12.wa.us/SpecialEd/default.aspx>

<http://www.k12.wa.us/HealthServices/pubdocs/504ManualFinal.pdf>

<http://www.bsd405.org/about-us/departments/special-education.aspx>

<http://www.bellevuespecialneedspta.com>

<http://wrightslaw.com/>

<http://www.lwsd.org/Parents/Special-Education/Pages/Promotion-Process.aspx>